

# Chancellorsville and Gettysburg

By JOHN McELROY.

## CHAPTER XVIII

## JUST BEFORE THE BATTLE.

The Great Armies Pushing Together at Gettysburg—Gen. Meade and His Plan.

## Meade's Orders Assuming Command.

Once convinced that it was his duty, Gen. Meade went about the execution of the responsibility so unexpectedly devolved upon him in the simple, straightforward, soldierly manner which was his leading characteristic. His order assuming command was modest, sincere and entirely befitting the situation.

## Headquarters Army of the Potomac, June 28, 1863.

"By direction of the President of the United States I hereby assume command of the Army of the Potomac. As a soldier, in obeying this order—I have no promises or pledges to make. The country looks to this army to relieve it from the devastation and disgrace of a hostile invasion. Whatever fatigues and sacrifices we may be called upon to undergo, let us have in view constantly the magnitude of the interests involved, and let each man determine to do his duty, leaving to an all-controlling Providence the decision of the contest. It is with just confidence that I rely upon the courage and the hearty support of my companions in arms to assist me in the discharge of the duties of the important trust which has been confided to me.

"George G. Meade, Major-General Commanding."

## Halleck to Meade.

Halleck's letter to Meade was all the new commander could desire. It was frank, free and full of the confidence which had been withheld from his predecessor. It said:

## Headquarters of the Army, Washington, D. C., June 27, 1863.

"Major-General George G. Meade, Army of the Potomac."

"General: You will receive with this the order of the President placing you in command of the Army of the Potomac. Considering the circumstances, no one ever received a more important command, and I cannot doubt that you will fully justify the confidence which the Government has reposed in you.

"You will not be hampered by any minute instructions from these headquarters. Your army is free to act as you may deem proper under the circumstances as they arise. You will, however, keep in view the important fact that the Army of the Potomac is the covering army of Washington."

"I obey it, and to the utmost of my ability will execute it. Totally unexpected as it has been, and in ignorance of the exact condition of the troops and position of the enemy, I can only now say that it appears to me I must move toward the Susquehanna, keeping Washington and Baltimore well covered, and if the enemy is checked in his attempt to cross the Susquehanna, or if he turns toward Baltimore, to give him battle. Should Gen. Lee move upon either of these places it is expected that you will either anticipate him or arrive with him, so as to give him battle.

"All forces within the sphere of your operations will be held subject to your orders."

of your own troops and those of the enemy so far as known.

"I shall always be ready to advise and assist you to the utmost of my ability.

"Very respectfully, your obedient servant,"

"H. W. Halleck, General-in-Chief."

Gen. Meade immediately sent a telegram in reply, as follows:

"Frederick, Md., June 28, 1863; 7 a. m. (Received 10 a. m.)"

"Gen. H. W. Halleck, General-in-Chief."

"The order placing me in command of this army is received. As a soldier

into the body of the Army of the Po-

had been to his predecessors. Public opinion in the army forms quickly, and the members of the other corps put themselves in position at once to learn what they could from those of the Fifth Corps as to the new commander. As the Fifth Corps was admirably loyal to Meade, it did not take long for the rest of the army to be strongly predisposed in his favor and entirely reconciled to the change. The corps moved on with fresh hope springing up in their breasts, convinced that they were now to encounter the enemy under circumstances more favorable than ever, with the chances of victory strongly on their side.

As soon as Hooker was superseded Halleck handed over to Meade the 11,000 men of French's Division at Harper's Ferry, which had been made the pretext for Hooker's resignation. This shows that both Hooker and the Administration understood that a change of command had to be, and the question of the men at Harper's Ferry was a mere subterfuge for accomplishing that change more or less gracefully.

Meade's course with regard to this reinforcement of 11,000 men has been the subject of much discussion. What it was obvious that he should do, he did not do; that is, incorporate the 11,000 fresh, available men directly into the body of the Army of the Po-

Lee's army, to our then certain knowledge, numbered 91,000 infantry, 12,000 cavalry and about 375 pieces of artillery, that without the reinforcement, taking into consideration the losses of the marches, we should be likely to fall short of that number of infantry; that your having an order which gave you control of the Fifth Corps and three batteries, you responsible, in the event of failure, for not making use of them; that in such an event they would in all probability be required to leave that post in the event of success they could be returned at once.

"You will doubtless remember that the bringing on of the general battle at Gettysburg was caused at his orders by Reynolds's collision with Hill, and the events that followed, prevented French reaching us in time, and it being determined that we should not receive orders were given him for his movements contingent upon our success or failure, as the battle would be fought before he could reach us. The telegraphic report of our correspondence will show this.

"I recall these facts to your recollection, knowing that the duties suddenly imposed upon you, and the time you may have caused you, while giving attention to other and more pressing duties, to fall to fitly decided in your mind these points. I shall be glad to know, if such is the case, that some other person than myself is alluded to by Gen. Halleck."

This was very graceful to Gen. Meade, it did not meet with his approval, and he refused to avail himself of it. Meade said that, yielding to Butcherfield's arguments, he had at first directed 4,000 men to the left, toward the land heights to guard the opening into the Shenandoah Valley, with the remaining 7,000 sent forward to Frederick to guard the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Later he learned that Butcherfield had the men on Maryland Heights were destitute of provisions, whereupon he ordered them to retire to Washington, taking all public property with them.

Change of Strategy.

While Hooker had cherished projects of breaking into the Valley in Lee's rear and cutting off his retreat—something which he had never done—done and which was the soldierly thing to do—Meade decided to put his army in a good position covering Washington and Baltimore, and by threatening Lee to compel an attack from him. He therefore deployed his corps out more to the right to prevent Lee's army passing by that flank to reach Baltimore, which he held the left flank resting on the South Mountain to make Washington secure.

The country in which the Army of the Potomac was now operating was a wide, triangular valley, with its apex near the mouth of the Monocacy on the Potomac, and Frederick, its key-point, situated in the narrower part of the valley. The Army of the Potomac was on the west to a parallel range of hills 40 miles to the eastward, and which shut off the watershed of the Monocacy from the rest of the region. From Frederick a number of good roads radiate to the north and east. One of these was the Harrisburg road, running by the way of Emmitsburg, Gettysburg and Hagerstown. Another was the York road, running by the way of Middleburg, Taneytown, Littlestown and Hanover. These main roads, running by the way of Emmitsburg, Gettysburg and Hagerstown, were the only roads running from the Potomac to the Susquehanna. The Harrisburg road, running by the way of Emmitsburg, Gettysburg and Hagerstown, was the only road running from the Potomac to the Susquehanna. The York road, running by the way of Middleburg, Taneytown, Littlestown and Hanover, was the only road running from the Potomac to the Susquehanna. The Middleburg road, running by the way of Middleburg, Taneytown, Littlestown and Hanover, was the only road running from the Potomac to the Susquehanna. The Taneytown road, running by the way of Middleburg, Taneytown, Littlestown and Hanover, was the only road running from the Potomac to the Susquehanna. The Littlestown road, running by the way of Middleburg, Taneytown, Littlestown and Hanover, was the only road running from the Potomac to the Susquehanna. The Hanover road, running by the way of Middleburg, Taneytown, Littlestown and Hanover, was the only road running from the Potomac to the Susquehanna.

Meade's Proposed Line at Pipe Creek.

Gen. Meade had formed the plan of going into line behind the ravine of Pipe Creek, which would make a strong defensive position covering both Washington and Baltimore. His Pipe Creek comes down from the eastern hills before mentioned near the little village of Manchester, runs between Taneytown and Gettysburg, and takes up Marsh Creek before falling into the Monocacy, some 15 miles above Frederick. The country was generally rolling and exceedingly fertile, yet the ridges of the creek were quite rugged, and there were frequently sharp playgrounds of the wild forces of nature as were seen in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Substantially Meade expected to deploy his line from Winchester to Middletown, with his corps in such position as to be ready to reinforce that portion which he might attempt to break thru.

As it advanced the army covered all the roads leading to Washington and Baltimore. The First and Eleventh Corps were at Gettysburg, the Third and Twelfth on Taneytown, the Second on Frizelleburg, the Fifth to Union and the Sixth to Windsor.

Major-General Gordon Meade.

The new commander of the Army of the Potomac was now in his 48th year, and as perfect an officer and soldier as any army could show. He belonged to a family which had always distinguished military tastes, and members of which had distinguished themselves in the army and navy. The ancestor of the family was Robert Meade, who emigrated from Ireland to Philadelphia some time prior to 1732, and became a prominent merchant. He was a zealous patriot, and his sons were public-spirited citizens, who took the lead in the resistance to the encroachments of the mother country. George Meade, son of Robert and grandfather of the General, in 1780 contributed what when considered an enormous sum—12,000 sterling—to help supply Washington's suffering army. The father of Gen. Meade went to Spain on business and remained there 17 years, and was employed for a time by the British and Spanish armies during the Peninsular War. He was also United States Naval Agent at the port of Cadiz, and it was at this place that his son, George Gordon Meade, was born Dec. 31, 1815. His father sent his mother and the children back to this country for young George, and he was employed for a time by the British and Spanish armies during the Peninsular War. He was also United States Naval Agent at the port of Cadiz, and it was at this place that his son, George Gordon Meade, was born Dec. 31, 1815. His father sent his mother and the children back to this country for young George, and he was employed for a time by the British and Spanish armies during the Peninsular War. He was also United States Naval Agent at the port of Cadiz, and it was at this place that his son, George Gordon Meade, was born Dec. 31, 1815. His father sent his mother and the children back to this country for young George, and he was employed for a time by the British and Spanish armies during the Peninsular War. 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